More CIA Documents Found Before George Trial

7/22/92

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Iran-contra prosecutors yesterday disclosed the belated discovery earlier this month of two boxes of covert CIA records under the desk of the custodian of documents for the agency's directorate operations.

It was not clear how many of the 2,000 pages that were found may be relevant to the Iran-contra scandal, but at least some of the information, according to prosecutors, is relevant to the trial of Clair E. George, former chief of the CIA's clandestine service.

George and his lawyers received copies of the documents Sunday, prompting them yesterday to seek permission that some of the papers be declassified for use at trial. U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth said he would convene a closed-door hearing this morning to review George's request.

Jury selection was entering its final stages when the judge was formally apprised of the discovery in open court last evening.

Associate Iran-contra prosecutor Michael Vhay told the court that at least one of the documents was relevant to George's trial on charges of lying and obstructing congressional and grand jury inquiries into the Iran-contra scandal. Prosecutors learned of the existence of the documents July 10 while conducting an interview of the official custodian of documents for the CIA's directorate of operations.

"She [the custodian] informed us that she had two boxes, uncontrolled, under her desk and not part of any CIA records system," Vhay told the court. "We had an FBI agent seize [the records] on the afternoon of July 10."

Vhay said the FBI also interviewed the custodian about the documents "she had squirreled away underneath her desk" and turned over the FBI's report of that interview to defense lawyers. While the relevance of the records to the Iran-contra affair remained unclear yesterday, Vhay's sketchy account indicated that at least some of the documents should have been disclosed five years ago, to the office of independent counsel Lawrence Walsh and to the House and Senate committees investigating the scandal.

The Iran-contra affair involved the Reagan administration's covert arms supply network for the contra rebels in Nicaragua, secret U.S. arms-for-hostages deals with Iran and diversion of profits from those deals to the contra cause.